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**Federal Investments in Active Transportation Fall Far Short of Growing Demand,  
Hampering States' Ability to Build Connected Infrastructure**

*Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Calls for Increase in Dedicated Federal Funding that Emphasizes Active Transportation Systems*

**Washington, D.C.**—While demand for investments in trail and active transportation infrastructure continues to grow across the U.S., cumulative findings from Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's annual analysis of the Transportation Alternatives program indicate that the country's largest source of funding for active transportation falls short.

During a policy briefing today, RTC highlighted significant discrepancies between demand for active transportation infrastructure and investments made. While many states are doing a good job of obligating federal funds, Federal Highway Administration reports indicate that nearly half of projects that applied for Transportation Alternatives in 2017 (more than 2,500 projects) were left unfunded, while RTC's analysis of the program found that more than \$635 million has been transferred to other programs in the past five years alone, despite high demand for these funds.

"Transportation Alternatives provides an important baseline of opportunity to meet demand for trails and active transportation in every state. The small but mighty program represents a fraction of the federal transportation budget—less than two cents of every federal highway dollar—yet these investments in active transportation consistently deliver a very high return," said Kevin Mills, RTC's senior vice president of policy. "Weakening that modest investment by allowing funds to be siphoned away severely limits states' ability to put safe walking and biking routes in place. This infrastructure is sorely needed to serve critical mobility, economic development and public health needs."

Since the program's inception in 1991, \$10 billion has been programmed by states for trails, walking and biking. In that time, the program has helped to build America's trails, which total more than 33,000 miles. What's more, it's delivered significant mobility and economic outcomes, creating more than an estimated 174,000 jobs and helping to increase the number of people biking and walking for transportation (11.5 percent mode share as of 2017). This funding provides a critical foundation for active transportation investments nationwide, however, it currently represents only 1.8 percent of the Federal-aid Highway Program.

RTC was joined during the briefing by Christopher Linn, Manager of the Office of Environmental Planning at the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission and Mike Smith, Transportation Alternatives Program Manager in the Office of Economic Development at the Michigan Department of Transportation. Each discussed the important role Transportation Alternatives has played in establishing significant active

transportation infrastructure in the states where they work, while also addressing the challenges of limited and unfocused funding sources in building large-scale active transportation projects. RTC discussed with the group its concern that the siphoning of funds away from the program paired with an already limited budget can be debilitating to states' and regions' plans for trails, walking and biking.

“Allowing states to transfer these funds for road projects is short sighted and limits the ability of an already small program to meet rising demand for walking and biking. More needs to be done to protect these funds, keeping them within the program or dedicating them only to TA-eligible projects,” said Mills.

In response, RTC is calling for a visionary approach to the 2020 reauthorization of the FAST Act, providing an increase in funding dedicated for active transportation; eligibility for active transportation projects across federal transportation programs; and focused investment in completing trail and active transportation networks. In addition, policy changes are needed to safeguard Transportation Alternatives funding to ensure that all states provide opportunities to address rising demand for safe places to walk and bike.

RTC has analyzed Transportation Alternatives spending since the program's inception, releasing an annual spending report that tracks program investments in each state. The most recent analysis can be found at [trade.railstotrails.org](http://trade.railstotrails.org). Learn more about RTC's efforts to inspire a visionary transportation reauthorization bill at [railstotrails.org/trailstransform](http://railstotrails.org/trailstransform) and follow the commentary on social media using the hashtag #TrailsTransformUS.

*Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation's largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines. Connect with RTC at [railstotrails.org](http://railstotrails.org) and @railstotrails on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).*